DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 075 010 JC 730 080

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TITLE CCAF: Introspect to Innovation.
INSTITUTION Community Coll. of the Air Force, Randolph AFB, Tex.
PUB DATE [72]
NOTE 16p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Career Planning; *Community Colleges; Educational Certificates; Educational Innovation; *Enlisted Men; Military Air Facilities; Military Personnel; Post Secondary Education; Program Descriptions; *Technical Education; *Transfer Programs
IDENTIFIERS *United States Air Force

ABSTRACT

The philosophy, objectives, and design of the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) are discussed. The seven campuses of the CCAF are drawn together around the CCAF administrative functions, which provide a career-oriented institutional context. The primary objective is to integrate the on-duty Air Force technical training and voluntary college-level education of Air Force personnel into a pattern with which to satisfy individual desires for career progression. The related education segments of CCAF programs depend on voluntary course work at any of the civilian community colleges and four-year institutions that conduct classes on or near Air Force installations. The culmination of the CCAF programs is award of the Career Education Certificate. The eight career areas in which CCAF students may major, depending upon their particular Air Force specialities, are: administration and management, aircraft maintenance, communications, crafts and trades, distribution services, electro-mechanical, health care services, and public services. These career areas are subdivided into approximately 75 individual programs, which parallel as closely as possible the post-secondary, two-year programs at accredited schools. (DB)

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CCAF- INTROSPECT TO INNOVATION

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ABSTRACT

"CCAF - Introspect to Innovation" serves as an introduction of the Community College of the Air Force concept to members of the technical education community. The article explains the philosophy, objectives and design of CCAF as the Air Force's contribution to a "university without walls" concept of career education.

JC 730 080

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

MAY 5 1973

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CCAF - INTROSPECT TO INNOVATION

The Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), conceived in April 1971 and born exactly one year later, is perhaps the most unique and innovative entry into the family of community colleges spanning the nation. Its organizational concept is novel, and the potential student body consists of approximately 500,000 airmen of the United States Air Force. A multi-campus, trans-regional system with its administrative center at Randolph AFB, Texas (San Antonio), CCAF is the educational manager of career education certificate programs carried out through existing, mutually affiliated schools of the Air Training Command and the Air Force Security Service. This technical education is combined with related education from cooperating community and junior colleges, four year colleges and universities to form a CCAF certificate program.

"The idea for a Community College of the Air Force was born in the Air Training Command, but planners here (Randolph AFB) soon sought the counsel of two other commands - Air University and the Air Force Academy - both of which had extensive experience in higher education and long association with the civilian academic world." [1]

1. John T. Correll (Capt USAF), "A Community College of the Air Force," Air Force Magazine, March 1972 (Washington, D.C.: Air Force Association), p. 65.

Together, these three commands proposed the concept of career education for Air Force enlisted personnel to the Pentagon, where both the need for and value of a Community College for the Air Force were quickly recognized.

Active service in the U. S. Armed Forces had too long been viewed as a three or four year void in a young person's life. Countless attempts have been made by servicemen, with moderate success, to obtain credit for their service connected educational experiences. A true career development pattern for enlisted personnel did not exist prior to the CCAF concept. One of the pillars on which CCAF is built is the Utah Project.[2] Since it was demonstrated that Air Force courses could be taught in Utah occupationally- oriented institutions at the post secondary and college level, CCAF planners pursued the idea of arranging to transcribe direct credit for these courses in the Air Force schools. By using a semester-hour unit as the basic common denominator, Air Force training could be combined with civilian institutional course work into a true career education pattern.

2. Utah Project was carried out by the Air Force Association's Aerospace Foundation under a grant from the U. S. Office of Education. Essentially, it makes certain Air Force technical curricula available to and adaptable for use by civilian institutions. USOE Report No. 8-0301

ACCREDITATION. Each of the seven campuses of the CCAF system has operated for years as a separately organized, independent school, providing technical training for Air Force job specialities. Together, the resources are centrally controlled by the U. S. Air Force; however, in the new pattern, these institutions are drawn together around the CCAF administrative functions, which provide a career-oriented institutional context. The Southern Association's Commission on Occupational Education Institutions was receptive to the proposal that Air Force technical schools become members of that association. The School of Applied Aerospace Sciences, at Sheppard Air Force Base, the School of Health Care Sciences, also at Sheppard, and the Air Force schools at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, filed applications for membership. Each of these schools was individually represented at the Southern Association's annual convention in Miami Beach. At the opening of the meeting, the Community College of the Air Force concept was briefed to the Executive Council of the Commission, and because of such factors as newness, size, and trans-regional organization, it was determined that the schools would seek accreditation on a one-at-a-time basis,

after which the whole might be considered. On December 2, 1971, each school was accepted as an affiliated member in the Commission on Occupational Education Institutions of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. On December 13, 1972 each school was accredited for five years. The two remaining schools of Applied Aerospace Sciences - Lowry AFB, Colorado and Chanute AFB, Illinois - located within the North Central Association region were also accredited for five years at North Central's annual meeting on March 28, 1973. Accreditation fosters beneficial access to Air Force curricula and methods and the interchange of policy information between military and civilian schools. In fact, the Curriculum Exchange Branch of CCAF's Liaison Division was established to foster such an interchange.

OBJECTIVES. CCAF's primary objective is to integrate the on-duty Air Force technical training and voluntary college level education of Air Force personnel into a consistent, meaningful pattern to satisfy individual desires for career progression. The related education segments of CCAF programs

depend on voluntary course work at any of the several hundred civilian community colleges and four year institutions which conduct classes on or near Air Force installations. Using the Air Force's Education Services program and the CCAF career education certificate patterns, Air Force enlisted personnel will have the opportunity to achieve worthwhile career educational objectives.

Other CCAF objectives include:

(1) Initiating accreditation and professional recognition for Air Force courses.

(2) Documenting an individual's progress toward completion of his educational objectives via a central transcript service and authenticating official transcripts by the institutional seal.

(3) Analyzing Air Force curricula of the affiliated schools in terms of industrial and paraprofessional association standards and civilian equivalency.

(4) Developing and communicating to students, through local education service officers, guidance toward educational programs which simultaneously fulfill Air Force needs and match civilian requirements for credentials. The culmination of the CCAF programs is award of the Career Education Certificate.

Realizing the importance of tying together these objectives

into a single vehicle of academic credibility, Air Force leaders have specifically chartered CCAF with the responsibility to: "Provide a permanent, accredited institutional context in which career education patterns may be shaped and documented."[3]

Career Education Certificate. The structuring credential of this effort to integrate Air Force technical training and voluntary education into a consistent, meaningful pattern is the Career Education Certificate. The Certificate Program consists of a minimum of 64 semester hours divided among the following:

(1) Technical requirements consisting of a minimum of 24 semester hours. In many instances, especially where required for association certification, more will be required.

(2) Related Education requirements consisting of a minimum of 25 semester hours representing each of the following areas: Communicative Skills, Science, Mathematics, Humanities, Social Sciences and Physical Education. As before, specific requirements within these areas may also be set forth.

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3. Air Training Command Regulation 23-10, (Department of the Air Force;Headquarters Air Training Command, Randolph AFB, Texas), July 20, 1972.

(3) Management and Military Science requirements consisting of a minimum of six semester hours.

The total requirement varies depending on the complexity of a particular career area. The model noted above is established as a minimal structure for all certificates awarded by the institution and, is often exceeded by the requirements of a specific career area program.

Completion of a Career Education Certificate Program requires progression through five steps -- testing and enlistment in the U. S. Air Force, admission, registration, advanced standing and candidacy. Testing and enlistment includes establishing eligibility for active service by meeting the required Air Force mental and physical standards. Technically, the test battery serves as an entrance examination since the tests are standardized and validated as predictors of an individual's ability and aptitude to benefit from certain types of Air Force Training. Assuming he is qualified for a particular career area, a potential enlistee has considerable freedom of choice, like any other student who seeks an education, to pursue the career of his choice. This newly developed technique is based on computerized forecasts of specialty requirements in military jobs, and changes constantly, much like the job market in the private sector.

Admission is achieved through successful completion of Basic Military Training. Here a student is credited with four semester hours, fulfilling the Physical Education, Health and First Aid requirements common to all CCAF career programs, while he completes processing tasks at the USAF School of Military Sciences at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

The third step of the process is registration for a particular CCAF Career program. Registration occurs when the prospective student, through his Education Services Officer, submits to CCAF an official transcript or comparable documentation from an accredited institution, containing proof of satisfactory completion of a course or courses which may be used in CCAF career programs. CCAF transcripts are automatically generated when individuals complete courses at any of the affiliated technical schools.

For those individuals who do not attend Air Force technical schools but enter apprentice training programs, a CCAF transcript is generated after a CCAF Careers Division evaluation of the courses documented on the transcript from another institution, as arranged by the Education Services Officer on the base where the apprenticeship occurs.

The final steps progressing toward achievement of the Career Education Certificate are Advanced Standing and Candidacy. Advanced Standing is indicated when a student has completed 45 semester hours of his CCAF career program. Candidacy occurs when a student has been certified by his Education Services Officer as having completed all requirements of his Career Education Certificate program. At this point, something should be said about the role of the Educational Services Officer. By virtue of his educational guidance and counseling training and role, the Education Services Officer performs functions analogous to a student's academic advisor in a civilian institution.

Upon receipt of the Education Services Officer's recommendation for candidacy, the CCAF Careers Division evaluates in detail the student's total educational experiences. A recommendation is made to the Policy Council, chaired by the Vice-President of the College. The Policy Council reviews the recommendation and assures that all requirements have been fulfilled. The Career Education Certificate is signed and forwarded to the individual by the Registrar, thus completing the process.

In its entirety, the Career Education Certificate Program consists of eight career areas in which CCAF students may major depending upon their particular Air Force specialties.

These are:

Administration and Management
Aircraft Maintenance
Communications
Crafts and Trades
Distribution Services
Electro-Mechanical
Health Care Sciences
Public Services

These career areas are further subdivided into approximately 75 individual programs, which are not only associated with an Air Force specialty but parallel, as closely as possible, the post-secondary, two-year programs at accredited schools across the nation. In this connection, it is interesting to note that approximately 90% of the Air Force specialties have direct equivalents in civilian occupations. Efforts are being made to incorporate federal and state licensing and para-professional certifying requirements, wherever possible, into the design of these programs. An example is certification of CCAF's Law Enforcement program by the Texas Law Enforcement Agency.

Career growth has always been a genuine concern of Air Force planners. CCAF administrators are convinced that the Career Education Certificate programs will stimulate an increase in

voluntary education enrollments with civilian institutions. To this end, the CCAF programs represent a combination of Air Force technical training, civilian technical education and related education which, together, reflect the autonomous, pluralistic system of education in the United States.

AN INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT. CCAF's mission directive which, in effect, has similar impact to a charter, charges its administration with providing "a permanent, accredited institutional context" for the career education needs of Air Force personnel. This task is to be accomplished by utilizing, in new patterns wherever possible, existing systems, facilities and material resources.

The Schools of Applied Aerospace Sciences, the School of Health Care Sciences, and the Air Force Security Service School provide the accreditable base from which to create a single institutional context. Theirs is a common philosophy of purpose, preparing individuals to enter Air Force specialties. However, each school retains its institutional identity within this philosophical bond through a series of parallel objectives, each attuned to its own needs, each managing its resources, each accomplishing its part of the overall Air Force mission. Individually, they are schools; together they serve the needs of the Air Force Community as the Community College of the Air Force.

The uniqueness of CCAF lies in the fact that it is a multi-campus, trans-regional institution, composed of affiliated schools, with a separate but distinct central administrative unit. This administrative unit, located at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, accomplishes the objectives previously discussed, and houses the integrated group of technical specialists and curriculum analysts which is the Careers Division. Responsibility for planning, building and directing the career education programs of the student body lies here.

At this point, delineation of curricula and program is necessary to add clarification to the CCAF institutional context. The technical curriculum is determined principally by the needs of the Air Force. These needs are communicated to the schools by a programming unit separate from the CCAF system. Of the 300,000 instructional hours in the system, some 75,000 each year are replaced by new materials, in response to changing technology and changing missions of the Air Force. Thus, the needs of the Air Force are satisfied. However, this constantly shifting curriculum is analyzed by CCAF in terms familiar to civilian institutions, blended with technical requirements for CCAF career programs, and combined with voluntary course work

at civilian institutions in an accredited institutional context. Administrative theorists will recognize this pattern of management, which Corson refers to as the principal of dualism, i. e., parallel power structures. Corson notes that parallel power structutes have always existed and must exist in the administrative structure of higher education institutions.[4] The patterns of delegation of authority are not consistent from one institution to another. Corson recommends that a distinction be drawn between academic and other functions, delineating officials responsible for each. This distinction is drawn in the CCAF pattern, with CCAF emerging as the academic entity in this parallel structure.

AN EMERGING INSTITUTION. The Community College of the Air Force is now a reality. Its student body is the Air Force's active duty enlisted population. Students receive program guidance and documentation, i.e., catalogs outling certification requirements, and transcript service from the CCAF's central administrative unit at Randolph AFB, Texas. Partial student aid in the form of tuition assistance for voluntary course

4. John J. Corson, Governance of Colleges and Universities. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1960

work at civilian institutions is handled through the Air Force's Education Services Program at the student's home base, where other necessary student personnel services are also available.

The initial transcript system became operational in November 1972, and is serving enlisted personnel who completed resident technical school courses after January 1968.

A professional staff of approximately 70 military and civilian educators have joined the college administration, and are evaluating Air Force training programs for credit and applicability to civilian certifying, licensing standards.

In the long run, CCAF planners are confident that this new institution will be the catalyst for a basic change in internal and external perceptions of an Air Force career, underlining the real quality of the U. S. Air Force technical training. CCAF planners further agreed it will contribute to a flexible, quality force capable of fulfilling peacetime missions and responding quickly, if required, to wartime contingencies.

Individuals who do not choose the U. S. Air Force as a career but exit service after a few years will take with them CCAF documentation as evidence that a service enlistment is not necessarily "time out" of a young citizen's life.

The CCAF's curriculum exchange function (making Air Force material available at cost to civilian educators) and the return to civilian life of individuals having CCAF documentation for placement in college programs or in business and industry allows the Air Force to be responsive in its role as a national resource. "The importance of degrees, licenses, certificates and other symbols of qualification in today's society cannot be overemphasized. The world of work has been called a 'certificated meritocracy' - a world in which doors open only to those who have the 'papers' attesting to their achievements. Perhaps that is too Orwellian a view, but few would argue that diplomas often sharply separate the socio-economic status of some members of our society from others who are equally deserving, but lack formal recognition of the qualifications."[5]

5. John L. Phipps (Colonel, USAF) "Development of a Community College of the Air Force," USAF Instructors Journal, Spring 1972 (Randolph AFB, Texas: Air Training Command), p. 10-14.